

Reflection Luke 12:13-21 August 3rd, 2025

Our journey through the parables in Luke continues this week with a well-known story about a rich fool who saw no sense in fair distribution of wealth. What was his, belonged to him and that was that. The generosity that we talk about was seen by the rich as mere folly. The parable serves as a timeless critique of greed and the pursuit of material wealth at the expense of spiritual and communal values. I say that because here we are thousands of years later still pursuing and basing our level of happiness and success on an accumulation of wealth and status. In the context of the 21st century, characterised by incessant consumerism, socio-economic inequality, and increasing concentration of power among the wealthy, the story Jesus told so long ago resonates more than ever especially at the time of death. Unfortunately, it's a time when we see and hear of dissention amongst family members, sometimes only being sorted out through the court system. Not only do long lost family members come out of the woodworks at the time of reading a will, but they also come out when a family member wins a great deal of money and becomes rich. Not because there is any great deal of love between the two, it's got nothing to do with a relationship - it's all about money and a perceived rise in lifestyle. A foolish way of reasoning. The kind of wealth Jesus was referring to has nothing to do with money, Jesus was all about the wealth to be found in being part of God's eternal Kingdom.

Sometimes when I'm listening to the radio, a person will bring up the issue of being treated unfairly at the reading of the will. There has been a dispute about how things have been divided up. That's the kind of conversation Jesus was having with the rich fool. Jesus was asked

to intervene in a family inheritance dispute, reflecting the human tendency to seek wealth and security in material possessions. That kind of wealth doesn't last forever – it's a fleeting kind of satisfaction. Jesus, however, turns the conversation away from material disputes, warning against greed, which Jesus defines as covetousness – (if we recall the ten commandments you will know that it's the tenth commandment.) not just a desire for wealth but an insatiable longing that can be all consuming and causing a thoughtless cross over of ethical values. This caution echoes the current global climate, where wealth accumulation often takes precedence over ethical considerations and social responsibility.

Unfortunately, we live in a time and world where a small percentage of the population controls an overwhelming majority of resources. The rise of billionaires, corporate monopolies, and financial institutions wielding immense power poses significant challenges to democratic governance and equitable wealth distribution. The rich fool's focus on building larger properties to hoard his wealth can be likened to the practices of modern corporations that put a greater emphasis on maximising their profit over the welfare of the community or even the environment and ethical labour practices.

We don't have to look too far to see just how fast wealth inequality is happening. The rich fool's ultimate demise -a life spent on self-indulgence and hoarding wealth, leading to his unexpected death serves as a sobering reminder of just how unpredictable life is for all of us. This teaches us about the transient nature of material wealth and the importance of investing in what is genuinely meaningful: we started this conversation last week- relationships, community, and a willingness to be there for others. In an age where mental health

crises and social isolation are alarmingly prevalent, nurturing genuine connections and addressing the needs of those less fortunate are more important than ever.

One thing we have taken for granted is our stewardship of the earth. Every day we hear about climate change and the many challenges all countries face. Challenges such as resource depletion, and environmental degradation – consequences of unchecked consumption driven by greed. As corporations seek larger profits, they often overlook ecological sustainability, and destruction endangering future generations. One of the messages Jesus wants us to understand is one of encouragement to adopt a mindset of stewardship rather than ownership, where we can see ourselves more like earth's caretakers rather than taking ownership of the earth. Each generation caring for God's world for the generation to follow. If we could see it in that way we enable ourselves to have an attitude of responsibility for the health of the earth and as carers for the well-being of all its inhabitants.

For us today, our call is for a radical re-evaluation of our values – moving away from individualism and materialism towards recognising that we are all part of God's creation having a responsibility to care for our world -- God's gift of love to us. This can be expressed through supporting local economies, practicing fair trade, advocating for environmental justice, and redefining what success looks like. Success ought to include contributions to the common good rather than just looking at financial wealth.

Jesus is issuing us an invitation to re-examine our priorities, challenge the status quo, and reject a culture of greed and power. It compels us

to authentically invest in compassion, understanding, and equity, recognising that our true riches doesn't lie in what we possess but in how we live and serve others, in the Spirit of Christ's generosity and love, not for our own gain. The greatest investment we have to offer to ourselves and those around us is our relationship with Christ.

In a world that seems to want transformative change, the call to let go of our *want* of material wealth so we can embrace God's kind of generosity is a starting point for individuals, communities, governments and nations.

I finish with a quote from W C Fields – '*A rich man is nothing but a poor man with money.*' It's a bit dated in language, but I think you get the meaning behind it. Amen